

Gulf of Mexico Program



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The Navarre Beach Marine Science Station Receives Gulf Guardian Award

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, Miss. – The Gulf of Mexico Program recently announced that the Navarre Beach Marine Science Station of Navarre Beach, Florida will receive a Gulf Guardian Award for 2011 in the Youth Education Category. The Awards ceremony will be held in conjunction with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Meeting on August 3, 2011, beginning at 6 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Westin New Orleans Canal Place in New Orleans.

The Navarre Beach Marine Science Station is a project that involves local high school students as well as community leaders, families, and tourists. In late 2008, the local high school marine science students held a town hall meeting for the Santa Rosa County Board of Commissioners and their School Board about converting an empty, unoccupied ranger station into an environmental center. The High School students succeeded in obtaining the site in March 2009. Over 2,000 community service hours later, the students, under faculty supervision, created what is now the Navarre Beach Marine Science Station. Since its official opening in August 2009, the Station has been host to well over 4,000 students and community members for programs concerning the local marine environments. The programs provide hands-on, feet-wet activities that educate and challenge participants of all ages on how to be stewards of our marine environment. The Science Station is student created and student driven. They share their love of the marine environment with younger generations, and ignite a spark of excitement for learning more. The Navarre Beach Marine Science Station empowers high school students with the skills and knowledge to teach future generations about the importance of our marine and near-shore habitats. The many projects the students complete, from nesting sea turtle awareness signs to the beach clean-ups and habitat restoration efforts, create a positive and healthy environment for locals and tourists alike to both learn from, and enjoy. The Navarre Beach Science Station program continues to expand involving two local high schools with dual-enrolled students, over-nights, summer camp, and public programs.

The Gulf of Mexico Program initiated the Gulf Guardian awards in 2000 as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. A first, second, and third place awards are given in seven categories: individual, business, youth environmental education, civic/nonprofit organizations, cultural diversity/environmental justice, partnership and bi-national efforts.

“I applaud this year’s Gulf Guardian winners for their environmental leadership and commitment to protecting and restoring one of our nation’s most treasured natural resources, the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf Guardians are true environmental stewards and protectors of this vital ecosystem,” said EPA Regional Administrator Gwen Keyes Fleming.

The Gulf of Mexico Program began in 1988 to protect, restore, and maintain the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem in economically sustainable ways. The Gulf of Mexico Program is underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a non-regulatory, inclusive consortium of state and federal government agencies and representatives of the business and agricultural community, fishing industry, scientists, environmentalists, and community leaders from all five Gulf States. The Gulf Program seeks to improve the environmental health of the Gulf in concert with economic development.

Gloria Car, Acting Director of the Gulf of Mexico Program said, “This is the 11th year of the Gulf Guardian Awards Program, and I am proud to say that each year the winners in all categories have represented the very best of environmental accomplishments in the Gulf of Mexico. The partnership of the Gulf of Mexico Program works to improve the environmental health of the Gulf, and the Gulf Guardian Awards is an important way for us to recognize these valuable efforts. The 2011 award winners truly exemplify the enthusiastic and committed citizens, communities, governments, and businesses who address complex problems to improve, protect, and sustain our regional and national treasure, the Gulf of Mexico.

For more information regarding the Navarre Beach Marine Science Station please contact: Charlene Mauro (850) 936-6080 mauroc@mail.santarosa.k12.fl.us or Christina Wagner (772) 801-9330 FeButterfly@aol.com

Editor’s Note: For more information about the Gulf Guardian Awards and the Gulf of Mexico Program, call the Gulf of Mexico Program Office at 228-688-3726 or visit our web site at <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo>.